

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**NATO'S NUCLEAR GLUE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The United States forward based its nuclear forces in Europe during the Cold War to compensate for NATO's inferior number of conventional forces facing the Warsaw Pact. In the absence of the common threat that was present during the Cold War; is it still necessary to keep U.S. nuclear weapons prepositioned in Europe? This paper reviews the past and current role of US nuclear forces in NATO, considers future nuclear policy options, and discusses potential consequences of those decisions. It will also consider the developing European security and defense policy (ESDP) and whether the nuclear capabilities of EU-member countries France and the United Kingdom will evolve into an explicit and viable nuclear deterrent policy for the European Union as a whole, with important effects on NATO's nuclear posture and future. With post-Cold War and post-11 September 2001 changes in the geopolitical environment and Western threat perception, do nuclear weapons remain a strong and cohesive medium that connects the collective interests of the alliance?



# NATO'S NUCLEAR GLUE

## Introduction

Almost a decade into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new Presidential administration and its strategy and policy makers may need to address possible changes to the forward basing of US nuclear forces and the contributions these weapons make to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) collective defense. In the absence of the common threat present during the Cold War, US leadership should consider whether past policy justifications for keeping US nuclear forces in Europe are sufficient given a radically changed security environment.

During the Cold War, NATO's nuclear forces played a central role in the alliance political solidarity and defense strategy. To deter major war in Europe, nuclear weapons were integrated into the whole of NATO's force structure. The alliance maintained a variety of targeting plans that could be executed on short notice and required high readiness levels and quick-reaction alert postures from significant portions of NATO's nuclear forces. For almost five decades, this nuclear posture was successfully vigilant in support of the alliance's Strategic Concept. This paper reviews the past and current role of US nuclear forces in NATO, considers future nuclear policy options, and discusses potential consequences of those decisions. It will also consider the developing European security and defense policy (ESDP) and whether the nuclear capabilities of EU-member countries France and the United Kingdom will evolve into an explicit and viable nuclear deterrent policy for the European Union as a whole, with important effects on NATO's nuclear posture and future. With post-Cold War and post-11 September 2001 changes in the geopolitical environment and Western threat perception, do nuclear weapons remain a strong and cohesive medium that connects the collective interests of the alliance?

## Focusing on Asia while Reinforcing Western Europe

The policy origin of US nuclear forces supporting NATO links back to strategic decisions made during the Korean War. In that early 1950s struggle, both Presidents Truman and Eisenhower used ambiguous nuclear threats to leverage outcomes and contain the war. The fear of nuclear weapons arguably deterred further Chinese support to North Korea and accelerated the subsequent armistice. In 1956 Paul Nitze, a senior US policy maker, made the following statement in light of those circumstances:

Whether or not atomic weapons are ever used again in warfare, the very fact of their existence, the possibility that they could be used, will affect all future wars. In this sense Korea was an atomic war even though no atomic weapons were used.

Both US deterrence and restraint limited the war from expanding into a larger Asian conflict, but was also applied against Russia in an entirely different region. President Truman later reflected on his most pressing concern and why the United States never used nuclear weapons in the Korean conflict. His position, from start to finish, was dedicated to keeping the war isolated to Korea because he did not want to provoke Russian intervention in Europe. In the words of President Truman:

Every decision I made in connection with the Korean conflict had this one aim in mind: to prevent a third world war and the terrible destruction it would bring to the civilized world. This meant that we should not do anything that would provide the excuse to the Soviets and plunge the free nations into full-scale all-out war.<sup>1</sup>

President Eisenhower was burdened with similar concerns about the Soviet Union. Rather than use nuclear weapons in the Korean conflict, he kept them in reserve and demonstrated his resolve against a greater concern – Soviet expansion and a clash in Central Europe. President Eisenhower openly signaled his concern by dispatching SAC bombers to British bases in July 1950.<sup>2</sup> His decision for this action was based on the CIA estimate that the Soviet Union was not willing to go to war with the United States over Korea but wanted to involve the United States as heavily as possible in Asia so that it might gain a free hand in Europe.”<sup>3</sup>

Stephen Walt highlights the common thread by which the United States made its three major overseas commitments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During World War I, World War II, and the Cold War, the United States acted to thwart the ambitions of hegemonic powers in Europe and/or Asia.<sup>4</sup> It is also important to remember that the United States did not intervene in either world war until it became clear that the Eurasian powers were unable to maintain the balance of power on their own. Following World War I, the United States withdrew its forces once peace was reestablished; because the Cold War immediately following World War II, US forces were greatly reduced but never fully withdrawn from Europe or Asia. The perception of Soviet threat in the late 1940's was enormous, with huge numbers of divisions, tanks, artillery, and support equipment in Central and Eastern Europe that the United States and its allies in Western Europe could not hope to match. As highlighted by the memoirs of Presidents Truman and Eisenhower the United States decided to offset the Soviet advantage of conventional strength with nuclear weapons. President Eisenhower in particular relied on nuclear weapons and, with his “New Look” strategy, began a rapid deployment of tactical nuclear weapons to the European theater. US nuclear forces have been there ever since.

## NATO Nuclear Force Policy and Strategy

The US deployment of nuclear weapons to Europe and its rationalization is the legacy of decades of evolving NATO nuclear policy. Its justification was largely centered on nuclear weapons as a fundamental element of NATO's collective deterrence and defense of Europe during the Cold War.

Political oversight of NATO's nuclear forces is shared among member nations. NATO's Nuclear Planning Group provides a forum in which the Defense Ministers of nuclear and non-nuclear allies alike (with the exception of France) participate in decisions on NATO's nuclear posture and the development of the alliance's nuclear policy.<sup>5</sup> This is based on agreement among the member countries that NATO must retain and must be seen to retain a core of military capabilities with an appropriate mix of forces affording it the basic military strength necessary for collective self-defense and policies that are adaptive to changing threats.

Nuclear policy making required flexibility because the US nuclear superiority quickly disappeared after the Soviet Union tested its first atomic device on 23 September 1949. This did not allow the Soviets an instant capability but it prompted military planning for potential nuclear exchanges. President Eisenhower adopted New Look and massive retaliation policies<sup>6</sup> to come to terms with the Soviet conventional and nuclear threat.

As the Soviet nuclear arsenal grew, massive retaliation lost credibility. The Kennedy administration, however, advocated and implemented "flexible response" as policy because it avoided the irrationality of massive retaliation, i.e., risking world destruction should the Soviet Union act provocatively regarding Berlin or other Cold War flashpoint. This policy was founded on the idea that the United States required a versatile and varied military force capable of fighting at all relevant levels of conflict. As an example, in the 1970s and early 1980s, Western leadership was determined to regain escalation dominance lost when the Soviet Union began SS-20 missile deployments. Foreign ministers in NATO approved deployment of 572 U.S. intermediate range nuclear weapons to Europe.<sup>7</sup> This policy decision placed NATO in a politically acceptable position to draw the Soviets into negotiations that led to the INF Treaty and the elimination of intermediate and short range missiles in Europe. It must be noted, however, that NATO's deployment decision was reached only after extreme political and public controversy within Europe over accepting new US nuclear weapons and delivery systems, highlighting different US and European attitudes toward threats and the appropriate responses to them.

### Cold War's End and NATO Enlargement

America's NATO membership securely anchored its commitment to the defense of Western Europe. In an attempt to counter the alliance, the Soviet Union established the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) framework. NATO enjoyed public support from its member countries and did not meddle in the internal affairs of its members. In contrast, the WTO was perceived as an instrument of Soviet power, propping up communist regimes in member countries and serving the security interests of the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

But history has a way of catching up with political tyranny and economic irrationality. The Soviet Union dissolved the WTO because the inefficiencies of communism could no longer sustain the Soviet military hold on the region. With its "security buffer zone" purpose increasingly irrelevant, Central and Eastern Europe did not have much to offer from the Soviet point of view. President Mikhail Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze compared the cost benefit of Eastern Europe and the energy resources it consumed to the profits possible elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Their new foreign policy, "New Thinking," served as the solvent that dissolved the Warsaw Pact.

Many things have changed as a result of the end of the Warsaw Pact and the breakup of the Soviet Union, including the primary threats to the West. To foster new democracies and the rule of law and to extend free markets to a region ignored and victimized for decades, NATO admitted some of the former Warsaw Pact states into the alliance. These new partners have integrated effectively and participated in critical alliance operations, such as peace operations in the Balkans. The transparency of their roles in NATO serves as a confidence building measure to strengthen NATO-Russia relations, although Russia was not happy with their NATO membership. NATO's military headquarters (SHAPE) also proved true to its commitment not to forward base nuclear forces in member states in Eastern Europe. The security circumstances of the immediate post-Cold War period also generated discussion on both sides of the Atlantic about opportunities to downsize and subsequently withdraw US nuclear forces from Europe since there was no hegemonic threat on NATO's doorstep. But the end of the Soviet threat to Europe did not mean that the world was a safe place. It allowed operational freedom and shifted US focus to other emerging threats.

### NATO Transformation and Arms Reductions in the Decade after the Cold War (1991-2001)

The first Gulf War disclosed not only US technical superiority over its allies but also disparity among the NATO countries' policy and interests. The dominant role of the United States in the coalition demonstrated US willingness to serve as a unipolar leader to defeat



aggression and its technical superiority over Soviet-equipped and trained forces. The United States also showed how it could strike against political, economic, and military bases of power without reliance on its nuclear force. The growing gap between US and European military capabilities and foreign and security policy was also evident in the Balkan Wars that occurred during much of the 1990s.

In Europe, the United States and its allies greatly reduced their conventional forces under the provisions of the Conventional Forces Europe (CFE) Treaty. The treaty is a complex instrument which established a military balance between NATO and the former WTO states by providing equal ceilings for major weapons and equipment systems from the Atlantic to the Urals. The objective was to establish military parity of armaments.<sup>10</sup> NATO also established a transformation organization that moved away from military confrontation with the Warsaw Pact and prioritized warfighting improvements geared toward out-of-area operations. The transformation initiative was furthered by the Prague Capabilities Commitment which pledged to enhance NATO's remaining conventional forces. These commitments were made against the most critical identified shortfalls, such as strategic air and sealifts, air-to-air refueling, air-ground surveillance, and unmanned aerial vehicles.<sup>11</sup>

As with conventional adjustments, NATO made drastic changes to the very number of weapons in its nuclear arsenal. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, both the United States and the Soviet Union took Herculean measures toward arms reductions in tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and its periphery. In the fall of 1991, President George H. W. Bush announced the first of two Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) that included: eliminating ground-launched theater nuclear weapons; removing tactical nuclear weapons from all surface ships, attack submarines, and land-based naval aircraft bases; taking strategic bombers off alert; taking the ICBMs scheduled for deactivation under START off alert; terminating the development of a mobile Peacekeeper ICBM rail garrison system and the entire small ICBM program;<sup>12</sup> terminating the Short-Range Attack Missile-II initiative; and establishing a Strategic Command under which all elements of the US strategic deterrent would be assigned. Additionally, President Bush called for an early agreement to mutually eliminate MIRVed ICBMs from the US and Soviet inventories.<sup>13</sup>

Less than ten days following President Bush's offer, President Gorbachev responded with the following proposals: eliminating all Soviet nuclear artillery munitions, nuclear warheads for tactical missiles, and nuclear mines; withdrawing all tactical nuclear weapons from surface ships, multi-purpose submarines and central storage bases; storing nuclear weapons for land-based aviation in central storage bases; eliminating a portion of naval tactical weapons;

proposing to totally eliminate navy tactical nuclear weapons on a reciprocal basis; removing all strategic bombers from day-to-day alert; and taking 503 ICBMs off alert status. In addition, President Gorbachev declared a one year unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing.

The NATO Nuclear Planning Group released a communiqué on 18 October 1991 to inform the NATO ministers that “there is no longer any requirement for nuclear, ground-launched, short-range ballistic missiles and artillery” and agreed to greatly reduce nuclear air-delivered bombs. In less than 30 days after their Rome summit on 7-8 November 1991, NATO leaders adopted “The New Alliance Strategic Concept” and highlighted the improved prospects for conventional defense. Arms control critics asserted the United States could preserve its security with a much smaller force posture of operationally deployed warheads. To reduce nuclear arms in Europe initiated trans-Atlantic debate for the requirement of any US weapons in NATO.<sup>14</sup>

After the dust settled from these various arms reduction initiatives, NATO had radically reduced its nuclear forces. The arms reductions totaled 85% from its peak<sup>15</sup> of over 7000 former weapons, the majority of which belonged to the United States.<sup>16</sup> NATO nuclear strategy remained one of war prevention but was no longer dominated by the fear of nuclear escalation. Collective nuclear forces were no longer targeted against any one country and the circumstances in which their use might be contemplated were considered to be extremely remote. Advocates argued that NATO’s nuclear forces continued to contribute in an essential way to war prevention, but were no longer directed toward specific threats.<sup>17</sup>

#### NATO’s Contemporary Nuclear Posture

With today’s less certain security environment, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld envisioned the continental United States as a potential power projection platform for conventional as well as global strike forces. When US conventional forces in Europe deployed to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in the Middle East, many did not return to their German *kasernes* or other European garrisons. A similar transformation occurred in nuclear forces in terms of the number of weapons forward deployed in European Weapons Storage facilities.<sup>18</sup>

These policy and deployment decisions support the language in the NATO Strategic Concept and reinforce the view that nuclear forces are assigned to NATO for political rather than military reasons:

The fundamental purpose of the nuclear forces that remain is political: to preserve peace and prevent coercion. They make the risks of aggression against NATO incalculable and unacceptable in a way that conventional forces

alone cannot. Together with an appropriate mix of conventional capabilities, they also create real uncertainty for any potential aggressor who might contemplate seeking political or military advantage through the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction against the alliance. By deterring the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, the alliance's forces also contribute to alliance efforts aimed at preventing the proliferation of these weapons and their delivery means.<sup>19</sup>

### Post 9/11 Security Environment and the Bush Administration (2001-2006)

Terrorists struck the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and took passengers on four airliners to their deaths on 11 September 2001; on 12 September 2001, NATO's North Atlantic Council for the first time invoked Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. This pledge of collective defense requires NATO members to assist in responding to any armed attack on another ally in Europe or North America. Several NATO members, including Canada, pledged direct military support to the campaign against terrorism shortly thereafter. Allied help was timely and real, with NATO AWACs surveillance aircraft deployed to the United States to assist in managing and safeguarding US airspace.

The Cold War seemed less complex than the transnational threats faced by the United States and the West after the terror attacks on New York City and Washington DC. The NATO security environment, as well as mustering collective military action, had also become more complex. The most likely threats to security came not from possible military aggression by one country against another, but from terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and from conflicts such as those which engulfed the Balkans in the 1990s and in Afghanistan against Al Qaeda and the Taliban; NATO faced potential deployments beyond its periphery in order to respond to crises. But this very possibility led to conflict within the alliance. Europe tended to identify its threats through a different lens than the United States and to address them through alternate means.

### Facing New Challenges

The new common threat to Europe is transnational terror and radical movements that have found intellectual sanctuary<sup>20</sup> in European societies. The radical plea from Al Qaeda and its associated movements enjoins its members to acquire and use weapons of mass destruction to achieve their ends.<sup>21</sup> The technical challenges of developing a weapon or device might prevent success on their own, but these groups are fiscally capable of purchasing weapons from a willing state sponsor, which NATO must dissuade and stand against undivided. The alliance has taken far-reaching steps to adapt its overall defense policy and posture to face

these new threats, but the only apparent change to NATO's nuclear and force posture has been the reduction in number of US nuclear weapons deployed in Europe and in the readiness level of dual capable aircraft to deliver them.

The European Union has also developed into a potential competitor of NATO as purveyor of security in Europe. Toward the end of 2004, the EU assumed command over the peacekeeping operation in Bosnia from NATO. Bosnia was a crucial test of the EU's military mettle, much more than the peacekeeping missions it had carried out in the Congo and Macedonia in 2003.<sup>22</sup> Over the last half century and paralleling the development of the European Union, Europeans have developed a set of ideals and principles regarding the utility and morality of power different from those of Americans. At the same time, Europe lost its strategic centrality to the United States because US policy concerns shifted to threats from regions such as the Middle East and Asia.<sup>23</sup> These two trends contributed to a strategic chasm between the United States and Europe.<sup>24</sup>

Whether conducting peacekeeping operations or limited nuclear war, the United States cannot afford to conduct operations without the legitimacy of an alliance or coalition. Preparing for the full spectrum of conflict requires substantial resources, but European fiscal outlays continue to lag behind those of the United States. The average European defense budget has gradually dipped below 2% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and contributes to the differences in strategic cultures. Europe places less value on power and military strength and more on soft-power tools such as economics and trade, indicating that the EU is content to remain militarily weak and economically strong. Europe, therefore, appears to be content to rely on its trans-Atlantic ally to engage those threats outside Europe with its demonstrated effective force projection capability.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Kagan linked Europe's tolerance of new threats with its relative weakness compared to the United States. Because it is weak, however, it also faces fewer threats than the United States.<sup>26</sup> With the external threat from the Soviet Union all but disappeared, many Europeans no longer see the requirement of military deterrence, internal or external, and now rely on their tools of diplomacy, negotiations, patience, the forging of economic ties, political engagement, and using inducements rather than sanctions. These attitudes may have pressed the United States toward more unilateral foreign and security policies. Although the widening gap might be alarming to US trans-Atlantic policy makers, the Europeans could potentially see the various gaps as irrelevant because they perceive a low-threat security environment.<sup>27</sup> The United States' withdrawal of conventional forces from Europe may have been one source of that perception.

Kagan's assertion that Europeans and Americans view the "war on terror" through different prisms seems to apply here as well. The strategic culture, responsibility, and instruments of power to deal with terrorism reveal great differences. Collectively, the EU is a regional power and the United States is a global power, so Europeans thwart terrorism through law enforcement while the United States projects military force globally to defeat it.<sup>28</sup> Critics of US unilateralism and its instinct to see most threats through the lens of a military solution highlight the divide in NATO between the United States and most other NATO countries, except the United Kingdom. In President George W. Bush's first administration, senior defense officials made comments that the "costs of allies outweigh their benefits,"<sup>29</sup> doing little to enhance alliance solidarity in the face of new threats.

#### Post 2006 US Elections and Nuclear Strategy

Interpretation of the US November 2006 elections and the change in the Congressional leadership indicates that President Bush has lost some of his freedom of action in the formulation and conduct of US national security policy and strategy. Public opinion also suggests that the United States has begun an irreversible retreat from the Middle East. The current political momentum in Congress is toward multilateral levers of power within coalitions and alliances rather than the near-unilateral action that US and UK force providers took against Iraq.

Although sometimes slow to apply its political will, NATO's unified action lends the US critical legitimacy and strengthens the alliance when it combines its policy and strategy through military operations. This is illustrated by NATO contributions to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan as it continues its campaign against resurgence elements of the Taliban. NATO parliamentary assembly described the potential consequences of unilateral US action in its annual report a year after the 9/11 attacks:

The risk is that America's non-politically defined war on terrorism may thus be hijacked and diverted to other ends. The consequences would be dangerous. If America comes to be viewed by its key democratic allies in Europe and Asia as morally obtuse and politically naïve in failing to address terrorism in its broader and deeper dimensions - and if it is also seen by them as uncritically embracing intolerant suppression of ethnic or national aspirations - global support for America's policies will surely decline. America's ability to maintain a broadly democratic anti-terrorist coalition will suffer gravely.<sup>30</sup>

NATO contributions and military operations in Afghanistan may prove critical to the future of the alliance. Regardless of national caveats that some member countries placed on their militaries, the multilateral effort legitimized and disarmed the Taliban's information campaign.

Taliban rhetoric of “Christian crusade” was squelched after two Muslim countries joined the ISAF coalition.<sup>31</sup>

### Nuclear Weapons and the European Union

Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the security aspirations of the European Union have grown and developed under the rubric of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP). To determine what security requirements ESDP should address, the EU members of NATO reviewed a range of their security shortcomings. The study revealed that 70% of the security needs were common to most. Europe also identified that not only did it require interoperability with the United States for security reasons, but also EU “intraoperability” when its own interests did not align with those of the United States.<sup>32</sup> The remaining 30% “underlap” or gap in security issues that the EU does not find necessary or were too difficult to address could be found in deep rooted national or historic reasons.

France is currently excluded from the NATO Nuclear Planning Group and has always exercised its independent nuclear calculus of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW); the United Kingdom, on the other hand, contributes its submarine launched strategic missiles for NATO targeting. President de Gaulle shared his thoughts on TNW as a war fighting tool. “Believe me, tactical atomic weaponry is an essential component of our defense system. If one day you have to choose, due to the lack of credentials, between strategic and tactical atomic weaponry, choose the latter, for it is better to perfect what is happening before the Apocalypse than the Apocalypse itself.”<sup>33</sup>

The new Europe is indeed an economic miracle and has many reasons to celebrate the EU’s fiftieth anniversary in 2007. For audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, it is a realization of an improbable dream. It is currently a continent relatively free of nationalist strife and blood feuds and from military competitions and arms races.<sup>34</sup> This success might prompt security planners to investigate the feasibility of the Europeans combining their nuclear forces under an ESDP construct, although there would be numerous challenges and politically sensitive issues to overcome. To be sure, the EU could have a full spectrum force by combining France and the United Kingdom nuclear arsenals into a European force of 550 weapons. This would suffice as nuclear deterrence and allow US nuclear weapons to return to American soil. But perhaps that is the key point – the forward basing and burden sharing of US nuclear weapons is worthwhile because it demonstrates commitment to the alliance.

But France would probably not agree to submit its nuclear forces to a strict collective defense. It has historically exercised its independent nuclear wild card and the deterrence value

of its nuclear forces as “deterrence of the strong by the weak” (*dissuasion du faible au fort*), also said to mean the persuasion of the strong by the weak.<sup>35</sup> Charles de Gaulle reinforced its meaning with this public statement in 1964:

Of course, the megatons that we could launch would not equal in number those of the Americans and the Russians are able to unleash. But once unleashing a certain nuclear capability and as far as one's own defense is concerned, the proportion of respective means has no absolute value. In fact, since a man and a country can only die but once, deterrence exists as soon as one can mortally wound the potential aggressor and is fully resolved to do so, and the aggressor is well convinced of it.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast to the nuclear independence that France exercises, the United States is a stalwart partner of the British Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE). US laboratories assist the AWE to sustain Trident delivery system components which are common to US systems. The United Kingdom has recently conducted parliamentary discussion and public debate about strategy and policy for its present and future nuclear forces in light of an aging nuclear submarine fleet. In his foreword to the white paper on the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent capability, Tony Blair refers to "regional powers developing nuclear weapons for the first time which present a threat to us ... We are already trying to counter the threat posed by a nuclear North Korea and by the nuclear ambitions of Iran." He adds: "And we need to factor in the requirement to deter countries which might in the future seek to sponsor nuclear terrorism from their soil." His speech included a list of "enduring principles that underpin the UK's approach to nuclear deterrence." Mr. Blair continued, the weapons "are not designed for military use during conflict but instead to deter and prevent nuclear blackmail and acts of aggression."<sup>37</sup>

The nuclear forces of France and the United Kingdom already contribute to the security of Europe by providing a collective deterrence. This might in time be formally given to ESDP, but it is unlikely that France and the United Kingdom would ever give up control of their weapons. This is emphasized in the White Paper, where the United Kingdom Government reiterates the importance of its attachment to the maintenance of its independent nuclear deterrent capability, both as a means of ensuring the security of the United Kingdom and its vital interests, and as an important element of its contribution and commitment to the North Atlantic Alliance.<sup>38</sup>

A withdrawal of US nuclear weapons from Europe could also renew Germany's interest in a nuclear weapons program of its own. Germany would then be surrounded by the atomic arsenals of France, the United Kingdom, and Russia and would most certainly ask why the biggest and richest nation in Europe should be denied the means of defending its interests in a perilous world.<sup>39</sup> This could potentially have the same effect on other economic powers in the world, such as Japan, that have been secure under the US nuclear umbrella. Prime Minister

Muazawa, for example, has noted the possible need for a Japanese nuclear program as a deterrent.<sup>40</sup>

### Conclusions and Summary – The Nuclear Future

To a large extent, the entire idea of an "Atlantic community" rests on America's willingness to commit its military power to defend its European allies.<sup>41</sup> Through military commitment as well as economic assistance, the United States achieved measurable benefits to further its interests and influence well beyond the military strengths of the alliance. The very purpose to deter Soviet aggression into Western Europe provided an umbrella under which a war-ravaged continent was able to rebuild and economic opportunities allowed to flourish; from the ruins of World War II rose highly successful economic powers in each theater of war.

The United Kingdom will undoubtedly remain a nuclear power and contributor to collective NATO nuclear deterrence, perhaps allowing the United States to withdraw its nuclear weapons from forward bases in Europe. A US withdrawal would demonstrate responsible stewardship for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Back in the mid 1990s, there was a bold effort by several retired flag officers and former commanders of US strategic forces who implored policy makers to completely remove nuclear weapons from Europe. Retired General Butler later made public statements that he knew the "window of opportunity" for the United States was narrow and "outmoded routines perpetuated by Cold War habits and thinking" disallowed us to seize the opportunity to completely remove US nuclear forces from Europe.<sup>42</sup>

This policy change would shift NATO security toward reliance on an incomplete Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) system. This strategy requires completion of several critical elements of the system and further integration of several components to provide protection against Iran's theater missiles. An integrated system will require partnership and trust in the alliance. Both are being tested by Russia and its relations with former satellite states Poland and the Czech Republic. These two countries play important roles in providing Ground Base Interceptor (GBI) sites for the US ABM system and have become targets of a Russian information and economic campaign to stall the project. Russia is leveraging the same economic tools which contributed to the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, energy resources on which Europe is reliant. This allows Russia to economically blackmail various European countries and potentially to render the ABM system ineffective. This campaign has been coupled with its announcement that it might withdraw from the INF treaty. Flexing newly found economic muscle and a resurgent military, Russia might make the former nuclear republics of the Soviet Union (Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine) wish they had not returned their nuclear weapons to a centralized command in Russia.



In light of these indicators of a resurgent Russia, it would be a strategic error to remove US nuclear weapons from forward bases in Europe. Despite the sometimes cumbersome political inertia in NATO, the allies are committed to improve military capabilities as evidenced by current allied operations in Afghanistan. US nuclear forces in NATO serve as a political power reserve. Forward basing them allows their potential rapid employment and use if NATO's conventional forces are overwhelmed. If the weapons are removed, there could be insurmountable political opposition to repositioning them in Europe if unforeseen threats or changes in the balance of power occur. NATO's nuclear forces remain an essential element of its core capability, notwithstanding the dramatic changes in the security environment that have allowed NATO to undertake major reductions both in its nuclear weapons and reliance on nuclear diplomacy.<sup>43</sup>

NATO has already reduced its reliance on nuclear forces. Its strategy remains one of war prevention but it is no longer dominated by the possibility of nuclear escalation.<sup>44</sup> The collective security provided by NATO's nuclear posture is shared among all members of the alliance. Moreover, the presence of US nuclear forces based in Europe and committed to NATO reinforces the political and military link between the European and North American members of the alliance. At the same time, the participation of non-nuclear countries in the implementation of the alliance's nuclear policies demonstrates alliance solidarity as well as the common commitment of member countries to maintaining their security and the widespread sharing among them of responsibilities and risks.<sup>45</sup> It also removes an incentive for countries such as Germany to develop their own nuclear weapons. As former defense secretary James Schlesinger has written, US nuclear weapons are the "glue" holding NATO together.<sup>46</sup> His comments date back to 1986, yet numerous staff officers on joint planning staffs and headquarters could have heard the same quote from current senior US defense officials.

In January of 2009, a new US administration should entertain these and other ideas regarding US nuclear weapons and NATO. When it does, the historians within the administration may consider the words of Sir Winston Churchill regarding the US atomic bomb: "Be careful above all things not to let go of the atomic weapon until you are sure, and more sure than sure, that other means of preserving the peace are in your hands."<sup>47</sup> The strongest source for NATO's unified existence - the Soviet threat - is gone, but NATO must now adapt its nuclear policy and force structure to emerging and likely threats such as new nuclear weapon states. The US role and alliance in NATO is as paramount today as it was during the Cold War and US nuclear weapons remain a key part of US commitment and alliance solidarity.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Year of Decision* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1955).

<sup>2</sup> Callum A. MacDonald, *Korea - The War Before Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 38-39.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Osgood, *Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy*. (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1957), 163-193.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The Ties that Fray: Why Europe and America are Drifting Apart," *The National Interest* 54 (Winter 1998/1999).

<sup>5</sup> NATO Office of Information and Press, *NATO Handbook* (Brussels, Belgium: NATO Office of Information and Press, 2001) 160-161; available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/handbook/2001/index.htm>; Internet; accessed 25 February 2007. Hereafter cited as *NATO Handbook*.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Mandelbaum, *The Nuclear Future* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 56-57.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-62.

<sup>8</sup> Otto Pick, "The Demise of the Warsaw Pact," *NATO Review* 39 (April 1991): 12-16; available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/1991/9102-3.htm>; Internet; accessed 28 March 2007.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> "Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE)," available from <http://www.fas.org/nuke/control/cfe/index.html>; Internet; accessed 29 March 2007. On-Site Inspections and protocols under the CFE Treaty.

<sup>11</sup> "Prague Capabilities Commitment," available from [http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreign\\_policy/nato/nato\\_transformation-en.asp](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/foreign_policy/nato/nato_transformation-en.asp); Internet; accessed 27 March 2007.

<sup>12</sup> "Small ICBM," available from [http://www.missilethreat.com/missiles-of-the-world/id.111/missile\\_detail.asp](http://www.missilethreat.com/missiles-of-the-world/id.111/missile_detail.asp); Internet; accessed 27 March 2007. The Small Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (SICBM) or MGM-135A Midgetman was a development project from 1986 to 1992. The idea was to create a lightweight, road-mobile ICBM that would be capable of surviving a Soviet nuclear attack. The US military intended to base the SICBMs at widespread locations, thus making them difficult to locate and destroy in a Soviet first strike.

<sup>13</sup> "INF Treaty," (Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the elimination of their Intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles);

available from <http://www.state.gov/www/global/arms/treaties/inf1.html>; Internet; accessed 28 February 2007.

<sup>14</sup> "Arms Control Organization," available from [http://www.armscontrol.org/pressroom/2005/20050428\\_USNW\\_Drell-Goodby.asp](http://www.armscontrol.org/pressroom/2005/20050428_USNW_Drell-Goodby.asp), Internet accessed 13 March 2007.

<sup>15</sup> *NATO Handbook*, 53-57.

<sup>16</sup> Robert S. Norris, William M. Arkin and William Burr, "Where They Were," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 55 (November/December 1999): 29.

<sup>17</sup> "Does Britain need Trident as a nuclear deterrent?" *Daily Telegraph*; available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?view=BLOGDETAIL&grid=F11&blog=yourview&xml=/news/2006/12/05/ublvview05.xml>, Internet accessed on 24 March 2007.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *NATO Handbook*, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Term used by a GO/FO in address to the Army War College. It described the regional Middle East Conflict as the first "War of Globalization".

<sup>21</sup> Provided as information in a noon-time lecture. Briefer provided information in a briefing titled the "Long War".

<sup>22</sup> Comment from guest speaker, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 18 October 2006, on the operational challenges and successes of the European Forces after its assumption of the EUFOR in Sarajevo.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Kagan, "Power and Weakness," *Policy Review* 113 (June 2002).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Stephen J. Coonen, "The Widening Military Gap between the United States and Europe: Does it Matter?," *Parameters* 36 (Autumn 2006).

<sup>28</sup> Kagan.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Sherwood-Randall, "The Case for Alliances," *Joint Force Quarterly* no. 43 (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2006).

<sup>30</sup> Karl A. Lamers, "Report of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations. 'Arms control and the Transatlantic Partnership after September 11, 2001'," available from <http://nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=253>; Internet; accessed 24 March 2007. Bringing together members of parliaments throughout the Atlantic Alliance, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly

has provided for half a century an essential link between NATO and the parliaments of the NATO nations, helping to build parliamentary and public consensus in support of Alliance policies.

<sup>31</sup> Guest speaker at the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 26 March 2007. The flag officer commented about the legitimacy of NATO operations in Afghanistan.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy Garden, "The Future of ESDP, Defence Capabilities for Europe," <http://www.tgarden.demon.co.uk/writings/articles/2003/030406iai.html>; Internet; accessed 13 March 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Chevallier, "La genese' de la force nucleaire de dissuasion francais," in *Armement & Veme Republique*, ed. Vaisse, 284. Taken from a letter written by De Gaulle dated 1968.

<sup>34</sup> Kagan.

<sup>35</sup> Charles De Gaulle, *Discours and Messages Volume 4* (Paris), 233; quoted in *Getting MAD: Nuclear Mutual Assured Destruction, its Origins and Practice* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, November 2004), 64.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Speech presented by Prime Minister Tony Blair, summarizing his white paper during an address to Parliament. Available from [http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/\\_Page10409.asp](http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/_Page10409.asp); Internet; accessed 13 March 2007.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Chapman, "How to Live with the Coming Spread of Nuclear Weapon," *Chicago Tribune*, 27 July 1993. The article also included Ukraine among the nuclear states encroaching on Germany.

<sup>40</sup> T. R. Reid, "Japan's Shift on A-Pact Raises Concerns Abroad," *Washington Post*, 15 July 1993. P. M. Muazawa pointed out the possibility of the need for a Japanese deterrent in the future. "Japan's Nuclear Program," *Washington Times*, 16 July 1993.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The Ties That Fray: Why Europe and America are Drifting Apart," *National Interest* 54 (Winter 1998/1999).

<sup>42</sup> "General Lee Butler's address to the State of the World Forum an international conference convened by the Mikhail Gorbachev Foundation in San Francisco, California, October 2 - 6, 1996,"; available from <http://www.prop1.org/2000/usgenbut.htm>; Internet; accessed 27 March 2007. General Butler spoke of his attempt to encourage US policy makers to remove all its nuclear weapons from Europe.

<sup>43</sup> *NATO Handbook*, 56.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 160-161.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>46</sup> James Schlesinger, "Reykjavik and Revelations: A Turn of the Tide?," *Foreign Affairs: America and the World* 1986, 65 (Winter 1986): 430.

<sup>47</sup> The words of Sir Winston Churchill, as quoted by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to a special joint session of the US Congress on 20 February 1985.

